

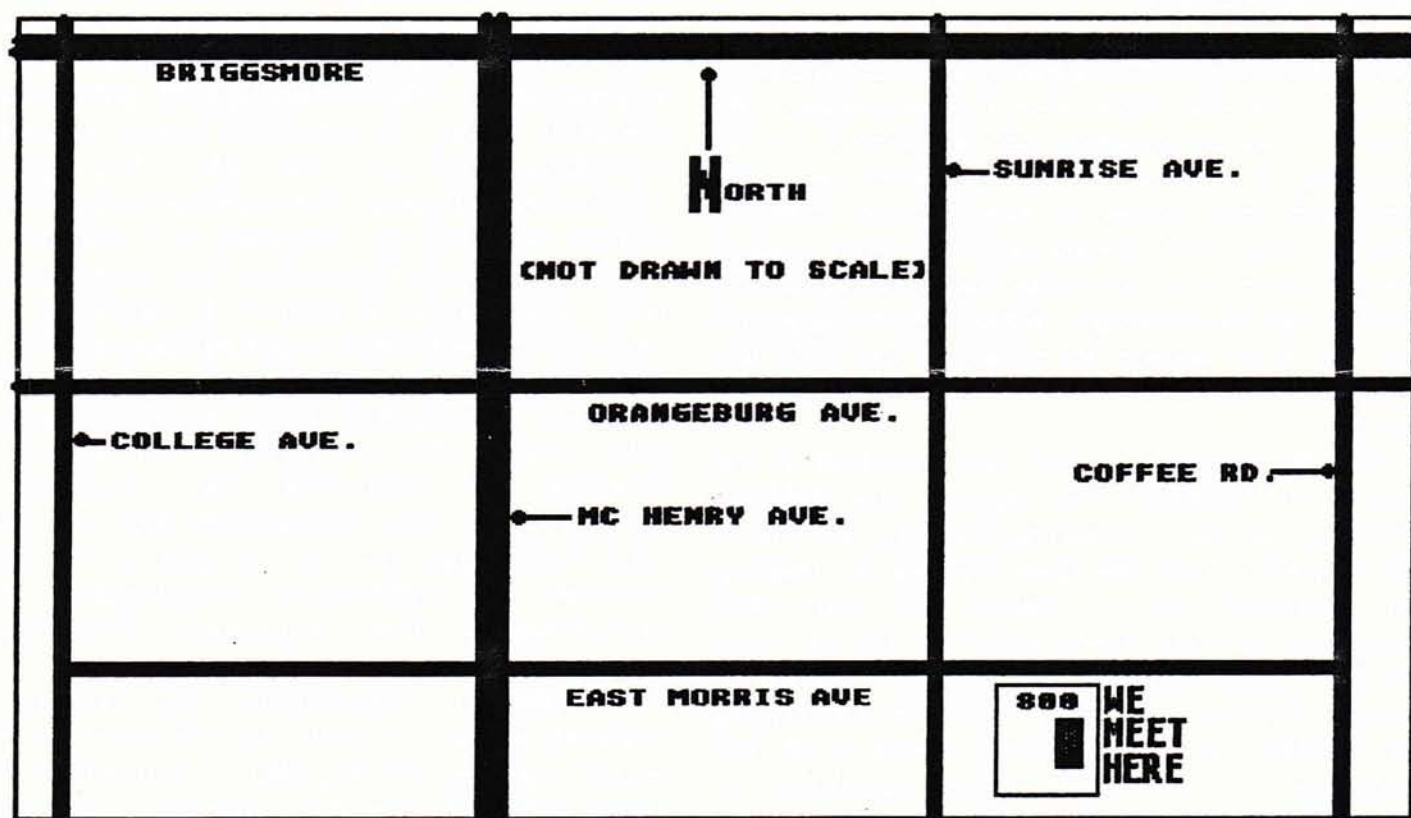
DATA LINK

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

September, 1987

The official newsletter of the Modesto Atari Computer Club

NOTE THE LOCATION OF OUR MEETING THIS MONTH---800 EAST MORRIS AVE.



**THIS MONTH'S MEETING WILL BE HELD AT:
MODESTO COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER AUDITORIUM
800 EAST MORRIS AVENUE (JUST EAST OF SUNRISE)**
(SEE ROUGH MAP ABOVE--NOT DRAWN TO SCALE)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, at 7:00 PM
JOIN US THERE, AND BRING YOUR COMMENTS ON WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO MEET

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The September meeting will be back to the second Wednesday of the month, at the Modesto Community Service Auditorium, 800 E. Morris. I hope that this place suits the most of you. I am told that people like it better than the Beyer High location.

We'll have several things in the works for the months to come. Our September meeting will be around the IMG Scan that I talked about last month. I will be showing and demoing it at the meeting. If you have something that you want scanned into Degas or Neo format, bring a photo copy of it (black print on white paper) and I'll scan it for you after the meeting. David Kapka will be showing a Turbo Fractals program on the 8 bit system for those of you that are interested in fractals. "Steven Bruce, this is for you".

We are planning to hold two meetings in the month of October. The second and SPECIAL meeting will be a Saturday meeting, and open on a walk in and visit basis. We will be sending an invitation out to about 250 past club members to invite them to join in. We will have several questions & answer sessions going on around the room. We hope to cover all subjects of interest. I'll tell you more about it at the meeting. If you have any questions or suggestions please step forward and make them. This is being done as a membership drive.

Have you heard the news that ATARI has bought out FEDERATED GROUP INC.? Yes it's true. The text that follows are excerpts from a news release that was received in the FEDERATED GROUP store here in Modesto. (For those of you that read this newsletter that are in other states, Federated Group consists of 67 stores located in the states of California, Arizona, & Texas. They deal in Television, Stereo, Computers and other related equipment.)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 23, 1987

SUNNYVALE and CITY OF COMMERCE, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 23, 1987 -- Atari Corporation and The Federated Group, Inc. announced today that they had entered into a definitive merger agreement pursuant to which Atari will purchase all the shares of Federated at \$6.25 per share in cash. Under the terms of the agreement, Atari will commence a tender offer for all outstanding common shares of Federated on or before August 28, 1987. A partnership consisting of Wilfred Schwartz, the chairman of the Board of Federated, and members of Mr. Schwartz's family, which owns approximately 55% of Federated's outstanding common shares, will tender its shares upon the commencement of the offer. Any shares outstanding following the consummation of the tender offer will be acquired in a merger by Atari at the same \$6.25 price. The closing of the offer and merger is subject to obtaining the consent of Federated's bank lenders and to at least 51% of the outstanding shares being validly tendered and not withdrawn, as well as certain other terms and conditions. The Board of Directors of Federated has unanimously approved the offer, determined that the offer and the merger are fair to, and in the best interests of Federated's stockholders and recommended that Federated stockholders accept the offer and tender their shares. Paine Webber Incorporated has acted as financial advisor to Atari and will serve as the dealer manager for the offer. Federated sells home entertainment and consumer electronics products through a chain of retail stores offering a wide selection of high quality, nationally recognized brand name merchandise at prices competitive with discount and other retailers.

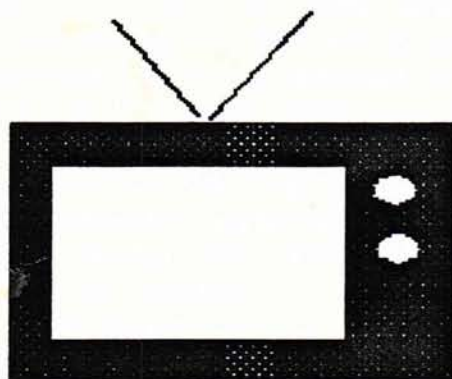
Atari Corporation is a leading international manufacturer and marketer of personal computer systems and video games. Its stock is traded on the American and Pacific Stock Exchanges under the symbol ATC.

What does this mean to us, the Atari user? Well, according to Buzz Kelley in the computer,

department at the Modesto Federated Group, a lot. They may not drop any of the computer equipment that is in the stores at the present. They probably will be adding to the ATARI line by also handling the 520 FMST, 1040 ST, SC1224, SM124 monitors, SH204 hard disk drive and the SF354, & SF314 floppy disk drives. They will probably be stocking a complete line of the popular ST software also. Buzz didn't think that they would have the 2600 game machine in the store because of the NINTENDO SYSTEM that is already in place. But he hopes that they support the 8 bit systems with software and other hardware.

Federated also wishes to remind you that "we will beat any price". That goes for product prices from Sacramento to San Jose areas. All you need to have to take advantage of this offer is the price of a product that you are interested in, and the phone number of the place that you wish Federated to beat in price. The matching store must have the product in stock, not be a close out, floor sample or other "one of a kind" item. Sounds good to me--

ROBERT JOHNSTONE, President, M.A.C.C.



NEO 1.0 SURPRISE



(reprinted from Pacenet St)

The greatest thrill of the Atari display at the CES show was the presence of Dave Staugas, the author of NEOchrome. Dave is a truly pleasant and cordial fellow, who really seemed to enjoy being at the show. He was showing off the one machine that had the Blitter chip (it is FAST!!!). We even got to see the actual chip. The chip (yes, one chip) was piggy-backed to the 68000.

The new OS ROMs offered a choice from the OPTIONS menu-bar TITLE, simply called BLITTER. That is how it is turned on and off. The demo running was the flying bird demo, but with about 5-6 birds. The demo was running faster than ours with one bird! (I have this demo, and will shortly place it on ATARINET).

Also, Dave showed us how to get to the animation in NEO v1.0. That's right, NEO 1.0 has animation built in, but you have to know how to get to it through the back door.

One note, the animation portion of NEO is NOT complete, but does work once you get it up. The trick is to select the GRABBER, then go over to the right side of the screen where the word GRABBER appears, with a blank box below it. Then you must place the arrow cursor on the 'R' in GRABBER, and with one pixel from the R to the left of the arrow, and one pixel above the arrow, click on the mouse button. If you do this correctly, the icon of a movie projector will appear, and you are ready to go.....

.....

EDITOR'S NOTE: Use the RIGHT MOUSE BUTTON to click on the pixel after you have moved the arrow to the upper left corner of the SECOND 'R' in GRABBER. If you don't get it the first time, move the mouse & keep on clicking. Perseverance will be rewarded, as mentioned above-- Roger

ST LIBRARY DISKS



Disk 53 ST WRITER 1.75 (C.M) brand new version
 WORLD 1.0 (C.M) text adventure
 MELT.ACC (C.M) dissolves your screen

Disk 54: DIS2ND (C.M) fast GEM disassembler
 VIX (C.M) full screen text editor
 SED (C.M) stream text editor
 DIFF (C.M) compare two files
 FGREP (C.M) string search utility
 LS (C.M) directory lister
 WHERE (C.M) directory path searcher

DISK #53

The new ST WRITER 1.75 (7/87) has arrived! This is the complete distribution, including an updated 100K manual. Changes specific to this revision include:

DEAD KEY allows direct access to accents, umlauts, tildes, circumflex, etc. of foreign vowels.
 <CTRL> W new function for use with print-to-screen, pauses each screen until a key is pressed.

BUG FIX 1 ALL previous versions prevented merging of non-STW files without messing up the current file in memory.

BUG FIX 2 print preview caused all following pages to be formatted before returning control to the user.

BUG FIX 3 problem with underlining spaces in outdenting.

These are the voyages of the starship ... You are a member of the advance landing party from the mother ship. Your job is to explore and collect specimens from an alien WORLD. WORLD 1.0 is a text adventure by J.D. McDonald consisting of two files and 162K. Game options

include HELP (a three page Introductory VERBOSE, BRIEF, SUPERBRIEF, SCORE, INVENTORY, LOCATION, SAVE/RESTORE, and maybe others. The parser can handle expressions such as "drop all but thing" but has a pretty weak vocabulary. It usually requires the use of prepositions (e.g. "look at thing", not "look thing"). It does seem to keep track of your location accurately and I haven't discovered any obvious bugs. If for no other reason than it's original (?) story line, this is small cut above the typical public domain text adventure.

Not since CRABS... MELT is a desk accessory which reversibly melts your monitor screen.

DISK #54

VIX is a full screen text editor written by Dr. Bruce E Wampler. It is based on TVX, which is very similar to VI, the UNIX text editor. Features include a 25-40-60 line toggle for use on high resolution monitors and the automatic conversion of original files to backup files to prevent their accidentally being overwritten.

SED is a stream editor which copies files to the standard output, edited according to a script of commands. It is reverse-engineered from the sed on BSD 4.1 UNIX and is considerably smaller and faster than the original. All documented features of the BSD 4.1 version are supported and the following bugs and limitations of the original have been fixed: There is no hidden length limit (40 in BSD sed) on w file names. There is no limit (8 in BSD sed) on the length of labels. The exchange command now works for long pattern and hold spaces. The following enhancements to existing commands have been made: a, l commands don't insist on a leading backslash-\n in the text. r, w commands don't insist on whitespace before the filename. The g, p and P options on s commands may be given in any order. Complete C source code is included.

DIFF, FGREP, LS, and WHERE are four UNIX tools with source code which have been ported to the ST by Jerry LePeer. The original source for

these tools is from various places but all of it has been moved to MEGAMAX C. Much of the power of UNIX-like utilities derives from their option switches. Since the switches have standard meanings I will simply list those available on the implementations here. The tools all have built-in help summaries. DIFF compares two files and sends the differences to the standard output. There are 13 switches in DIFF (in this case words instead of letters). FGREP [-?vcinhyefxps] is a string "find" utility. LS [-aclrstuv] is a directory lister. WHERE is a directory search utility which allows you to search directories from any directory level.

DIS2ND is the second version (4/87) of Scott Swentex's fast one-pass disassembler. This version is GEM and disassembles RAM or files (PRG, TOS, TTP, ACC, O). It has options for outputting a parallel hex listing, symbol table (if one exists), and flagging data longs. DRI directives are used. This version works much better than the first version. Scott is making arrangements to market version 3.

--ROBERT FORSTER, 16 Bit Librarian

GIANT MONITORS

Looking for a composite monitor and/or a VCR output from the ST? Several approaches are underway, but stay away from passive cables that work off RF output. The quality is a bit like viewing the world through a Kleenex. An active device that produces composite from the original RGB source is needed. It's coming from Practical Solutions--makers of Monitor Master, a useful switch box that toggles between color and monochrome monitors. The composite board produces superb color saturation on a large 25" TV monitor. Sharpness on a high quality monitor is close to that of ST's color monitor. But the ST's 70 Hz output signal has given some sync problems that are mostly cured. Now working on slight chroma bleeding problems. Look for release in August/September. The prospect of generating screens, documentation, and what-have-you from your ST to your VCR for demonstration, teaching, lecturing, etc., puts your ST into a rather new world.

(Reprinted from CURRENT NOTES, Jul/ Aug)

XM301 MODEM WARNING



If you own an Atari XM301 modem, you may own an electronic "time bomb".

After a rash of hardware failures last month, which included smoking a disk drive and two printer interfaces, I found the cause of my problem to be my XM301. The modem worked fine, but was killing off my system piece by piece.

The reason has to do with the 13 wires coming from the serial I/O plug, although only nine wires are actually used by the modem. The other four wires have about 1/8 inch of bare wire showing, and are just hanging around, unterminated, waiting to touch something they shouldn't. I have checked other XM301 modems and this condition existed in them too.

Here is what to do IMMEDIATELY.

With the power OFF, remove the two screws from the back of the modem and lift off the plastic case. Inspect the wires where they enter the case. You will find four of the wires are not connected to anything. If these four wires show any bare metal, cut it off.

Be careful not to let the cut-off pieces fall into the modem board.

Next, tape each wire individually, so that it cannot possibly touch any other wires or part of the modem. Put the modem back in its case, replace the screws, and you're done.

I've written to Atari regarding this problem, but have not received a reply as yet.

(Reprinted from the newsletter of the Atari Federation)

NEW TOS ROMS & BLITTER

The following article was recently posted on GENie by Atari Corporation.

TOS ROMS -- BLITTER VERSION The 1987 revision of TOS is scheduled for release in conjunction with the new "blitter" chip. The new TOS has been upgraded to include support for the hardware blit as well as retaining the software blit functions for full compatibility with older software which relies on hardware timing (a definite no-no). Changes in the new ROMs are:

RS232: The RS232 handler has been completely rewritten. RTS/ CTS handshaking now works. Baud rates 50 and 75 now work.

CLOCK: Support is now included for the Mega ST's built-in, battery-backer-up realtime clock. The realtime clock is automatically used by the XBIOS gettime and settime functions for the IKBD. The GEMDOS clock is reset from the realtime clock at the termination of every program.

STARTUP: Memory clear at system startup is much faster. Improving performance on multi-megabyte systems.

DESKTOP: The desktop now includes a control for deactivating/activating the blitter chip. Also, the Save Desktop and Print Screen selections will request confirmation. Spurious characters are no longer written to the DESKTOP.INF file. Doing a PRINT or SHOW from the desktop will now display characters with ASCII codes above 127. SHOW and PRINT use a larger buffer now. Single drive copies now require fewer disk swaps.

CART: Cartridge handling has been revised, eliminating the need for "CARTSTART" code and allowing .TOS and .TTP programs. Lower case letters will now be accepted and passed to an application from the "Open Application ... Parameter" box.

AES: The AES will now send repeat clicks the mouse button is held down on the arrow or page controls of a window, which lets a window smooth scroll. The AES underscore bug is now fixed.

APPL_TPLAY and APPL_TRECORD now work. The limit of 30 characters on a line in an alert box is now rigidly enforced.

MOUSE: The mouse redraw can now be set to XOR mode. The system will return after a single click if this is what was requested.

DMA: The DMA bus can now have more than one device attached at powerup time, without any special software.

FLOPPY: The floppy read/ write code checks for more errors now. In prior versions, the system would not report a CRC error under certain circumstances; now it will. This hurts some copy protection schemes. The format of the floppy disk has been skewed from track to track to improve disk speed; the XBIOS supports this by using -1 for the skew value and placing a pointer to a one word per sector skew table the previously unused longword.

VDI: The VDI will now draw arcs with small angles.

BIOS: Character out routines are much faster.

BLITTER: Automatic blitter chip support is included in line-A and VDI calls. The extended inquire will report a larger performance factor than before, allowing applications to check for the presence of the blitter. A new XBIOS call has been added to check for the blitter and to activate or deactivate it. The blit is not reentrant -- line-A and VDI should not be called from within an interrupt.

REGISTER: The registers D0, D1, D2, A0, A1, A2 have always been forfeit when a trap call was made. Now the demise of these occurs under more conditions than before.

MEMORY: Slightly more RAM is used by the system. Programs that were close to the edge on a 520ST may no longer fit.

VARIABLE: Most undocumented system variables have been moved. You were warned!

NOTES AND WARNINGS:

1. Some programs depend on the OS always

being at \$FC0000. This is "not" cast in stone and will probably change soon. To find the OS header, use the pointer "sysbase" as documented.

2. The 4 megabyte ST puts the screen near the end of accessible RAM. Sloppy programs that have been writing past the end of the screen will give bus errors if they do so on the 4 meg ST.

HORROR STORIES ABOUT PRINTERS

By BRIAN STARFIRE
Dallas Morning News



HORROR STORY NO. 42: A company with four secretaries replaces its old word processors with modern personal computers and word processing software; all four personal computers are connected through a printer-sharing switch box to a laser printer. Everything works relatively well except that the printer, through no direct fault of its own, turns the situation into a fiasco. Here's why: The printer, like most low-cost laser printers, is based on the same small copier technology that has brought us the personal copier. You know the machine: You see it advertised on television by actors a lot, and you can buy one at any number of places for around \$600 or less. That kind of copier is great to have in your study or basement, for running off a few copies here and there, or 200 fliers every other week or so. But no experienced office worker in his or her right mind would purchase one of those machines for a large office, and then proceed to handle a roomful of employees' copying needs. In the case of this horror story, that's precisely what happened with the laser printer. Based on personal copier technology designed to handle no more than 3,000 copies

per month, the printer was connected to the computers of four employees, who collectively generate more than 3,000 pages of work in five days. The printer regularly provides poor quality prints, breaks down often, and uses up costly supplies at a rate far exceeding what was ever expected. The printer manufacturer can't be blamed, because the printer is attempting to perform a job it was never designed to handle.

This horror story is all too common in the new field of laser printers. Otherwise sane individuals, who wouldn't think of buying a personal copier to handle the entire office, will buy a laser printer and then wonder why the machine can't reliably print 100,000 pages a year. If you're in the market for a laser printer for the entire office, consider some points other than the price tag. Duty cycle is probably the most important point to look at. This number represents the number of prints per month that the printer is designed to handle reliably. A popular laser printing engine made by Canon has a duty cycle of 3,000 prints per month; that printer forms the heart of many lasers in the \$2,000 to \$3,000 range, including the older Hewlett Packard Laser-Jets, and the QMS Kiss. As the price tag goes up, the duty cycle tends to increase; Texas Instruments' OmniLaser, rated at 10,000 per month, will cost you around \$6,000, while Xerox Corp.'s 4045, rated at 15,000 per month, will cost around \$5,000. Another factor to think about is how much the printer costs per page. Like personal copiers, most laser printers use snap-in replacement cartridges containing supplies used by the printer to create those dazzling graphics. If you have to replace a \$90 print cartridge every two weeks, your per-page cost probably would be significantly higher than you first suspected. If your office already has fallen into the trap of underestimating your laser printer needs, there's probably not much you can do, other than buying another printer. But if you are planning to purchase a laser printer, think about the overall bottom line, and not just the price tag in the showroom.

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E X C H A N G E
 W E L C O M E
 6H

Vol 5 Issue 3
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MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS :
 Disk Library (now has 95 disks)
 Discount purchases at various area vendors
 Support from other ATARI users
 A monthly Newsletter
 ST SIG plus ST Library Disks
 ATARI User Group Support

(PLEASE NOTE)

Items for print in the newsletter must be submitted 14 days before the next meeting
 (handwritten copy okay if legible)

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Our next Meeting:
 September 9, 1987
 (Wednesday) 7:00 pm

LOOK
 At:

TO :

SLCC Newsletter Exchange
 P.O. BOX 1506
 San Leandro CA 94577

Modesto Community Service Center Auditorium
 800 E. Morris Ave.
 (Just east of Sunrise)